Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

Canada

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
www.chrc-ccdp.ca

Resources

News Room

News Releases

2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2004 | 2003 | 2002 | 2001 | 2000

23/07/2002

Society Must Recognize the Reality of Same-Sex Couples in the Definition of Marriage

Ottawa - July 23, 2002 - The Canadian Human Rights Commission applauds the decision of the Ontario Superior Court allowing for same-sex marriages. The Commission believes it is a positive step in ensuring a more just system in which people are not discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation.

"Same-sex couples are entitled to respect and dignity as all other Canadians," said Anne Adams, Acting Chief Commissioner. "Much progress has been made in the recognition of the human rights of gays and lesbians over the past decade. Recognizing the reality of same-sex couples in the definition of marriage is a symbol of respect and should be a priority for our society."

Even as recently as ten years ago, many human rights laws, including the Canadian Human Rights Act, did not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Over the past 10 years, same-sex partners have fought for rights such as pension and health benefits and other advantages available to heterosexual couples. In 2000, Parliament passed legislation treating same-sex partners the same as heterosexual common-law couples for all purposes under federal law. However, legislators included a provision stating that the legislation did not change the definition of marriage as "the lawful union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others."

The Canadian Human Rights Commission recognizes that marriage is a sensitive issue bound with deep-rooted beliefs and cultural practices. It is, however, a reality that there are many gay and lesbian Canadians living today in long-term, committed relationships, caring for each other, and raising families together. They are deserving of respect and dignity including the recognition in law of their union.

"The Federal Government has the responsibility to exert its leadership and to do what's right so that all Canadians, no matter their sexual orientation, are equal before the law", added Ms. Adams.

Last Updated: 2004-02-27

2008-02304/